

**DEVISE**  
Interreg Europe



Digital tech SMEs at the  
service of Regional Smart  
Specialisation Strategies

# Action Plan

**PP10 Voka - Chamber of Commerce  
West Flanders**

**VOKA**  
Kamer van  
Koophandel  
West-Vlaanderen

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## 1 GENERAL INFORMATION

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- **Project: DEVISE**
- **Partner organisations: Voka - Chamber of Commerce West Flanders**
- **Country: Belgium**
- **NUTS2 region: West Flanders**
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## 2 POLICY CONTEXT

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The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

DEVISE addresses the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Operational program under the 'investment in growth and jobs' objective Flanders 2014-2020.

ERDF in Flanders is constructed around the following thematic objectives:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
2. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
3. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
4. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
5. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

The operational program 'EFRO Vlaanderen 2014-2020' focusses on strengthening sustainable development, the competence of Flanders and providing an essential contribution to the realization of the European Objectives in the context of Europe 2020 – Strategy for an innovative, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Flemish Operational program is developed around 4 axes:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
2. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises
3. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
4. Sustainable urban development

## 3 ACTION: DIGITAL EXPERIENCE LABS

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### 3.1 BACKGROUND

#### Context of the project call:

The action 'Digital experience labs' addresses the Operational program ERDF Flanders 2014-2020, more specific axe 1: stimulating research, technological development and innovation.

Specific objective: 'supporting of transfer/dissemination of technologies towards knowledge valorisation and marketing':

In order to strengthen its position as a dynamic knowledge region, Flanders must constantly optimize the valorisation of technological and non-technological knowledge. Stimulating and supporting innovative projects with knowledge applications is an important instrument for this. The transferability of these projects to other companies, organizations and institutions are key. The transfer of knowledge to valorisation is a difficult link in the development of the knowledge economy in Flanders. The available knowledge must be valorised in economic activities and social applications to improve support and maximize the impact of that knowledge developed. Today the economic, industrial and social valorisation of research results in Flanders is too limited. In addition, there is also a lack of it economic entrepreneurship and the broadening of the concept of innovation is becoming insufficient stimulated. The innovation process in policy often ends with awareness raising and disclosure. Demonstration projects can be considered important tools to make the bridge from development to implementation with an economic valorisation in Flanders and possibly internationally. This should result in more new and innovative products, processes and services, in a larger economic and social added value and international valorisation of Flemish knowledge. Demonstration projects have on that bridging the gap between the completion of research and development and the rolling out of innovation across Flanders. Demonstration projects must arise from a real problem or a real opportunity and one must always keep an eye on business economics perspective. The extent to which an idea, concept, application, ... is transferable to its economic fabric in Flanders is an important criterion. Another point of attention is that a project proposal must be additional to the existing range of tools, services and products already available on the market. To meet the intended objectives ("knowledge dissemination of innovative technologies and concepts") the term "demonstration project" can be broad interpreted. Besides demonstrating the innovative technology itself (depending on the technique in the setting of an infrastructure / pilot line / test line or rather via a developed tool / software or demonstrating innovative ones methodologies or business processes,...), it can also take the form of flanking actions entrepreneurial guidance (collective or in a more limited composition) can play a role in the dissemination of knowledge.

### The digital experience labs

The Flemish economic fabric is largely built around small ones companies (SMEs). It is characteristic of such enterprises that innovative applications are more difficult to adopt. Nevertheless, Flemish companies are increasingly confronted with challenges in this area. The need for digitization is an important point of attention. For this reason it is an explicit policy objective to service as many as possible Flemish companies (mainly SME's) regarding digitalisation and this through an accessible approach. By the mean of 'digital experience labs' Flemish companies and public actors will be given the opportunity to experiment with applications in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the digital support of business processes".

With this call, the ERDF program responds to the identified needs and we ensure that Flemish SMEs will have easy access to assistance and advice for their projects with the wide range of data-driven technologies. In concrete terms, this call aims at project proposals that provide for the supervision of a large group of Flemish SMEs by:

- Demonstrating, testing and experimenting with new data-driven digital technologies
- implementing smart data management

The emphasis is on tailor-made guidance for SMEs with a view towards integration and application of data-driven technologies in companies. This implies making infrastructure, hardware, software, tools and methodologies available and on the other hand the necessary (technical) expertise regarding both the technologies and the guidance of companies. Implementers are also expected to collaborate with and be complementary are existing initiatives aiming the digitization of Flemish SMEs and future initiatives such as the possible Flemish European Digital Innovation Hubs that will target specific domains (see 5. Action: EDIH industry 4.0).

The improvement of the policy instrument will be done though the implementation of 2 type of projects. See more detail in further sections.

### 3.2 KNOWLEDGE APPLIED FROM DEVISE

<b>Partner practice/experience (please, detail: practice name, short description and location)</b>	<b>good</b>  <b>good</b>  <b>short</b>  <b>How this good practice/experience has contributed to the actions developed in your Action Plan (detail any transfers, full or partial of good practice)</b>
<b>DEVISE regional supply/demand analysis</b>	Devise has provided a methodology to monitor and assess the current situation regarding the digital transformation of SME's. The regional analysis has served to verify and to further identify the needs and consequently the opportunities.
<b>SeAmk – Finland</b>  <b>Regional Manufacturing Digital Innovation Hub : IoT-compass</b>	<p>The good practice is providing a large panel of services within the hub such as the assessment of the digital maturity of companies as well as providing infrastructure for testing. Companies can utilize laboratories for their own development work with the guidance of specialists.</p> <p>The good practice has been a great inspiration regarding the method to make technologies and infrastructure available for companies and forming a suitable consortium.</p>

### 3.3 ACTION DESCRIPTION

The overarching objective within the project is to allow Flemish-wide companies, in particular SMEs, to take steps forward digitization through an easily accessible approach. Specifically, we want to achieve this on the basis of a customer journey, with as persona the SME (from very diverse sectors) that is willing to invest in a digital transformation and needs accessible advice and guidance for this. Project types 1 and 2 are interrelated, which is visible in the customer journey.

Within each province, one of the Voka entities takes up the leading role. Voka is convinced that companies will easily find their way if this is done in the same way in every province. The customer journey contains 5 aspects:

1. Broad awareness-raising based on a communication plan (project type 1)

2. Guidance of SMEs by capturing their individual needs and needs and working together into an action plan with priorities and a first insight into possible guidance by a knowledge partner or other partner (project type 2)
3. SPOC regarding matchmaking, contract proposal and follow-up advice / guidance / testing (project type 2)
4. Tailor-made advice and guidance (and testing) regarding low-threshold digitization, including data-driven technologies (project type 2)
5. Implementation (including matchmaking private parties) (project type 2)
6. Evaluation - monitoring project indicators - digital platform (project type 1)

**CUSTOMER JOURNEY**

	Bereiken / Aantrekken	Begeleiden naar actieplan	Begeleiden van de KMO naar een advies	Begeleiding naar implementatie	Evaluatie v/d begeleiding en digitale hub
Acties KMO	Klikken op advertentie/webiste/newsbrief/sociale media Netwerking	Bedrifsbezoek => Individueel actieplan Keuze actiepunten Contractvoorstel voor de gekozen actiepunten	Laagdrempelige advies op maat geleverd door de relevante partner Tenten van datagedreven digitale technologie(en)	Contact leggen met relevante partnerorganisaties, waaronder private technologieinstellingen Voorbereiding implementatie digitale technologie(en) – beschikbaar budget en mankracht	Opvolgesprek/evaluatie
Toetspunten	Communicatie: - Offline (persmomenten – ondernemers ...) - Online (nieuwsbrief - sociale media ...) - sensibiliseringscampagne Bestaand aanbod: infosessies/labs/netwerking/webinars Tools: o.a. Digitale quick scan, andere scans	Bedrifsbezoek => Opstellen actieplan Onafhankelijk expertenpanel geeft advies incl. meest relevante partners Offertaronde bij relevante partners voor de gekozen actiepunten. Contractvoorstel	Gebruik van (technische) expertise. Gebruik van infrastructuur, hardware, software, tools en methodieken. Begeleiding op maat Ontvangen van gepersonaliseerd advies op basis van resultaten binnen de onderzoeks- en/of testfase.	Terugkoppeling en-bepalen verdere stappen. Contacten leggen met implementatiepartners Matchmaking met implementatiepartner/technologie-partner	Opvolgesprek/evaluatie relevante partners Opvolgesprek/evaluatie private technologieleverancier
Acties in consortium	PROJECTTYPE 1 On- en offline communicatie	PROJECTTYPE 2 Begeleiding KMO bij het opmaken actieplan Advies door een expertenpanel Opmaken contractvoorstel begeleiding	PROJECTTYPE 2 Verdieping van de vraag Onderzoek en testing technologie Advies op maat van de KMO	PROJECTTYPE 2 Terugkoppeling advies en-bepalen verdere stappen Contacten leggen met implementatiepartners en matchmaking KMO	PROJECTTYPE 1 Opmaken roadmap: lessons learned in functie van consolidatie van de digitale hub
Coördinatie digitale hub – digitaal platform					

In order to qualitatively realize the specific activities within the customer journey, complementary partners are brought together within the consortium:

- Organizations that have access to a large group of companies, can guarantee a Flemish-wide operation as well as have the necessary experience in guiding companies
- Knowledge institutions/research institutions that have the necessary infrastructure and expertise. We make explicit use of the available infrastructure that has been carefully mapped out.
- Voka invests in a digital platform on which all action plans, contracts, matchmaking can be shared with the consortium partners involved.

### **3.4 TIMEFRAME AND FUNDING**

Pre-registration: 18 September 2020

Full project proposal: 20 November 2020

Start project: 1 January 2021 – project for 2 years

Total project costs project type 1: €112.500 per hub (five hubs in total)

Funding project type 1:

- 40% ERDF
  - Operational Program 'Investment in Growth and Jobs' Flanders 2014-2020
- 10% Hermes
- 50% co-financing promotor

Total project costs project type 2: €1.387.500 per hub

Funding project type 2:

- 40% ERDF
  - Operational Program 'Investment in Growth and Jobs' Flanders 2014-2020
- 30% Hermes
- 30% co-financing SME

### **3.5 WORKPLAN**

Throughout both project Voka will be promotor and SPOC.

Project type 1 (only Voka)

1. Communication towards SME's
  - a. Online communication & offline communication: drawing up an annual communication plan on the basis of available communication channels that can widely reach entrepreneurs. all stakeholders, consortium partners and organizations close to entrepreneurs will be involved in this process. an annual awareness-raising program will also be drawn up
2. Digital platform
  - a. Development and implementation digital platform: a digital platform will be developed that will contain all specific project-related information. It will also be used to monitor the performance of the consortium partners.
3. Coordination hub



- a. General coordination and administration: coordination of the different project activities as well as providing support towards the consortium partners
- b. Consultation consortium partners and stakeholders: a steering committee will be set up.
- c. Aligning with other complementary initiatives
4. Evaluation guidance and organisation
  - a. Development roadmap: roadmap with lessons learned in function of the consolidation of the hub.

Project type 2 (Voka: promotor and 5 other partners)

1. Guidance SME towards action plan
  - a. Guidance action plan
  - b. Advice expert panel
  - c. Contract proposal
2. Guidance SME towards advice
  - a. Deepening the question
  - b. Research and testing technology
  - c. Tailored advice
3. Guidance SME towards implementation
  - a. Feedback advice and determining the next steps
  - b. Matchmaking with private implementation partners

The following knowledge institutions/research institutions are consortium partners:

- ILVO, Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- VIVES, University of Applied Sciences
- Howest, Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen. University of applied sciences and arts.
- Flanders Make, strategic research centre for manufacturing industry
- Sirris, collective centre for and by the technological industry.

The partners are going to focus on work package 2: guidance SME towards advice. More specific deepening the question, research and facilitation testing/demonstration towards a tailored advice regarding technologies.

### 3.6 BUDGET BREAKDOWN FOR THE ACTION

Project type 1

Travel and accommodation	€628,36
Overhead	€10.418,04
External services	€10.000
Promotion and publicity	€22.000
Personnel	€69.453,60

Project type 2

Operating	€196.384,80
Overhead	€141.667,20
External services	€105.000
Personnel	€1.387.500

### 3.7 VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

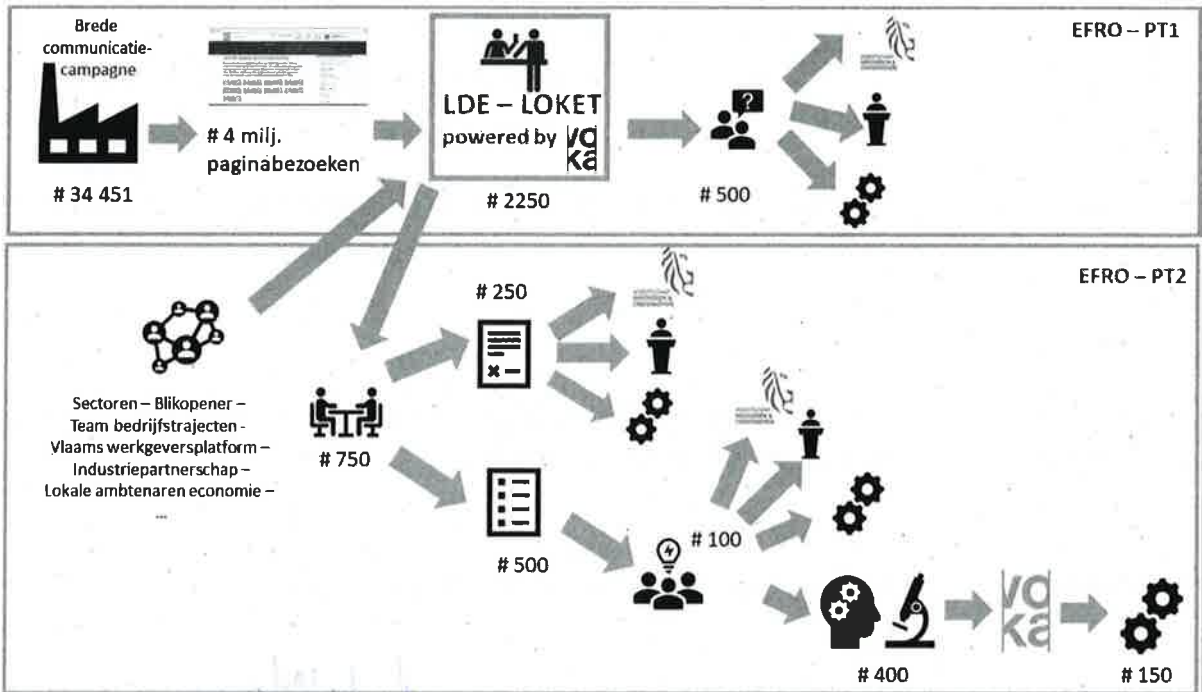
Within project type 1 the last work package is dedicated on developing a roadmap with lessons learned in function of the consolidation of the hub. It will be examined whether the project can be self-sustaining over time.

### 3.8 IMPACT EXPECTED

We expect to achieve the following KPIs across the five hubs:

- General information provision: 34.451 companies
- Registrations: 2.250 companies
- Registrations that will lead to intensive guidance: 750 companies
- Trajectory after contract phase: 400 companies
- Implementation: 150 companies

These KPI's will be monitored frequently within the coordination of the hub and adjusted if necessary.



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On behalf of Voka - Chamber of Commerce West Flanders I would like to confirm our support for the Action Plan developed through the DEVISE project.

We agree, where appropriate, to promote and give assistance to the delivery and implementation of the projects and other activities as detailed in the DEVISE Action Plan.

I confirm that I have the required authorisation to do so and that the required authorisation process has been duly carried out.

On behalf of Voka – Chamber of Commerce West Flanders

Name: Bert Mons  
Position in Organisation: Managing Director  
Date: 28/02/2021

*Bert Mons*